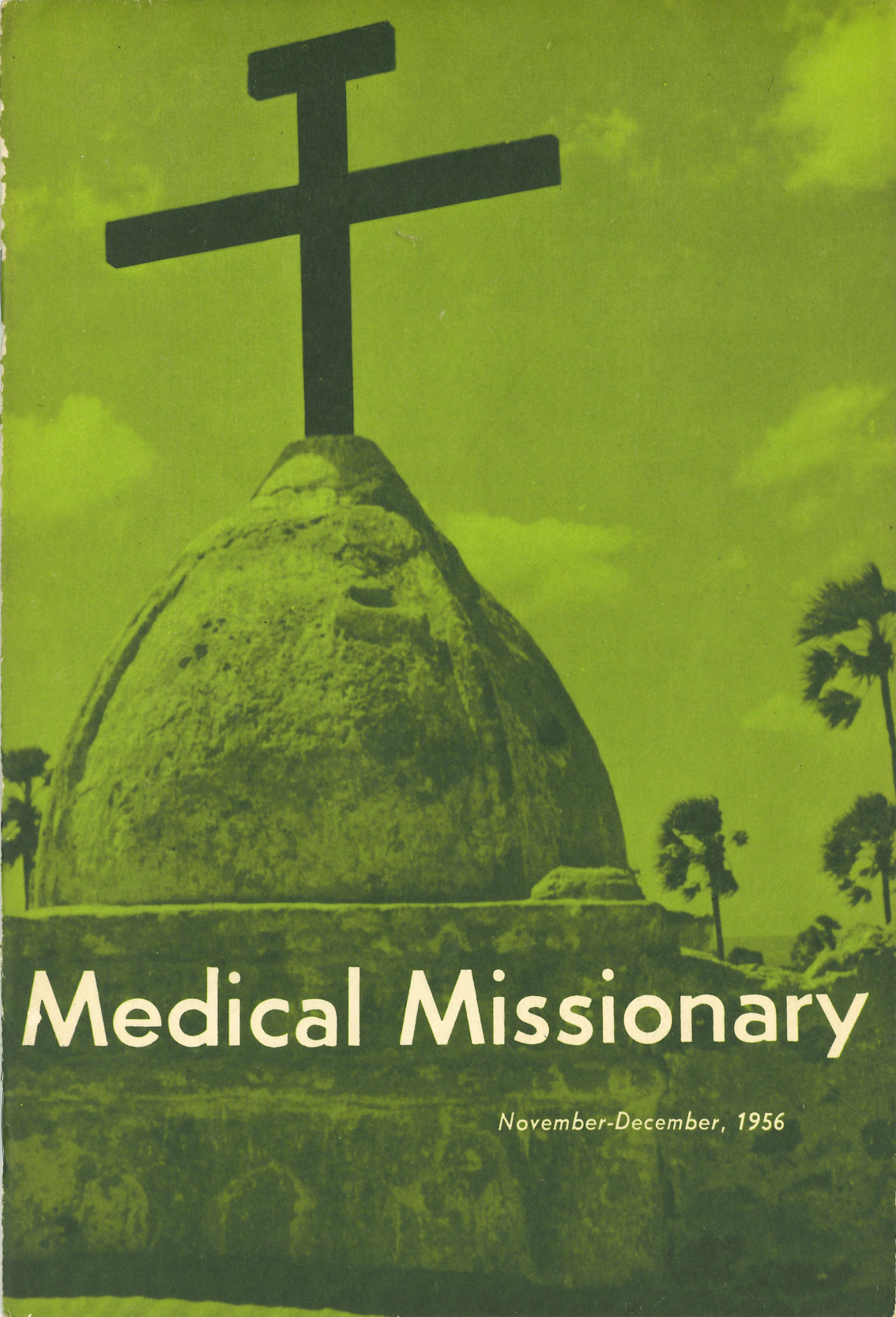

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November-December, 1956

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featuring — MALABAR, SOUTH INDIA

COVER: Syrian cross, Malabar

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Malabar's Privilege

EDITORIAL

EACH nation, each national character has its own grace and a certain corresponding work to do for God in the history of humanity."

Thus writes Father Faber, speaking of the Providence of God and His all-embracing interest in the lives of all peoples and nations, and thus one could write of Catholic Malabar, whom God made the depository and herald of Christianity in South India. These St. Thomas' Christians as they are called, had the honor of receiving the Christian faith directly from the hands of an Apostle chosen and taught by Christ Himself. Could not God say to them, as He spoke to Isaias, "I have given thee to be a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the farthest part" . . . of India?

There is a saying abroad, now-a-days, that "Christianity is foreign to India"; that it is a "western commodity"; that, as soon as an Indian becomes a Christian he must abandon his Indian social customs, and adopt western ones. It is high time to correct this false impression and to prove that Christianity is universal. Its practice in all times and in all countries has been to accept all that is naturally good, just, and beautiful, in the social customs of the people. It can grow in any soil.

Where will we look for a group of people who by their lives and Christian faith will give the lie to the accusation that "Christianity is a religion of the West"? The Church and India may well look to Malabar, especially Syro-Malabar, which can boast of its *Indian* and *Catholic* heritage for the last 1900 years; where even today, its Catholic citizens are held in high esteem in national and social life.

Catholic Malabar is not lacking either the spiritual or material resources necessary to fulfill the roll that Providence is pointing out to her —to share the Gospels in their original purity with her own land—India. Her people have faith and generosity. Her educational institutions are crowded and numerous. It is the unique privilege of Catholic Malabar to bear witness to the universality of the Church.

I HAVE
GIVEN THEE
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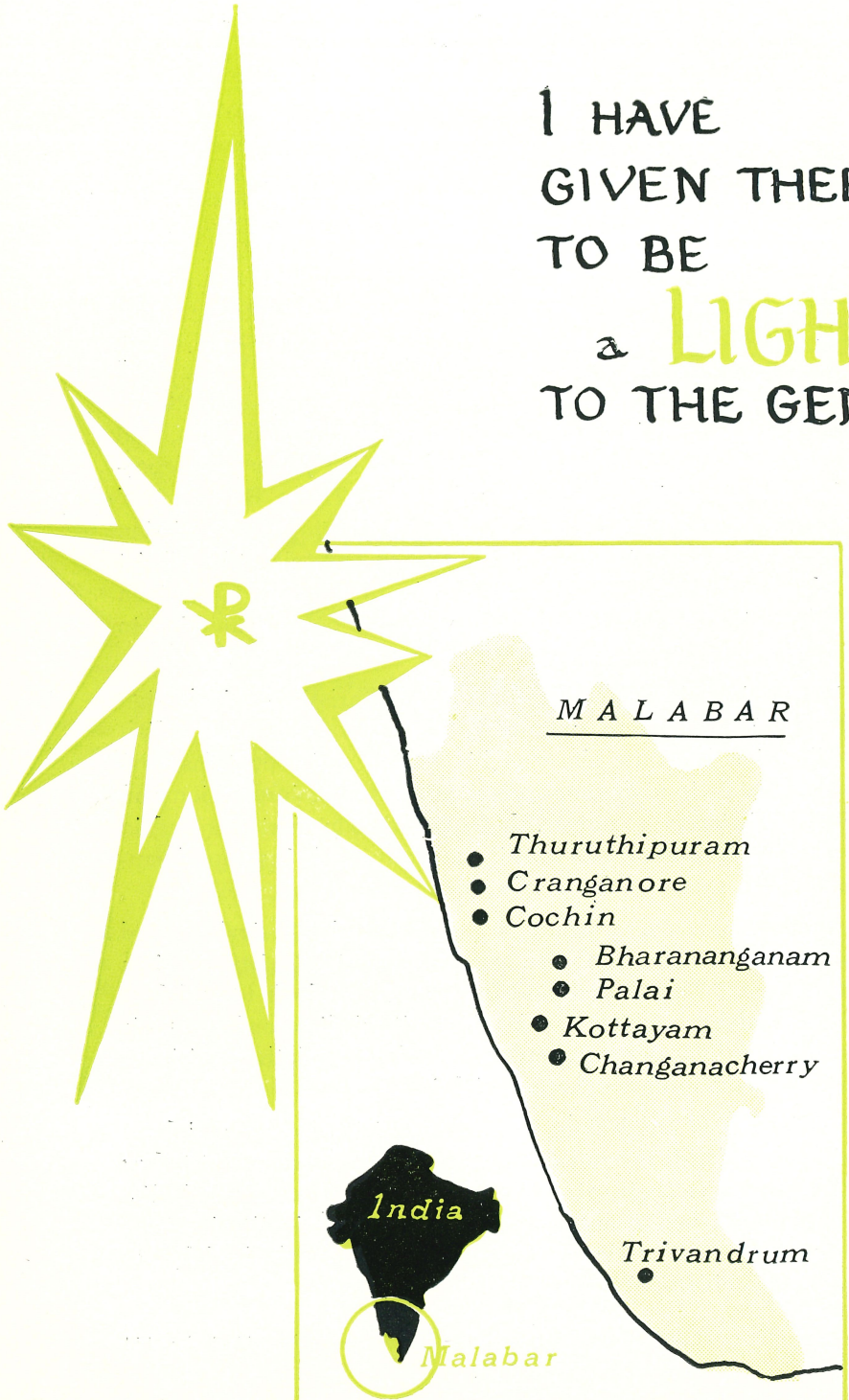
TO THE GENTILES



20 CENTURIES OF FAITH

Sr. M. Cuthbert, S. C. M. M.

The Syro-Malabar Church has its origin in the most ancient Christian communities which received the light of the Gospel from the Apostle St. Thomas

In the south west of India between the mountains and the deep blue Indian ocean lies a land of lagoons, canals and rivers and of gorgeous sub-tropical vegetation, a land very different from the rest of India in its geography and history and in the language and lives of its people. Though many of its inhabitants are fisher-folk, Kerala or Malabar has been famous since the days of ancient Egypt for its peppers and spices. Coconut palms, bananas, rice, tapioca plants, tea, and rubber grow in a profusion that rivals the colorful wealth of flowers.

Malabar is about as big as New Hampshire and has 11,000,000 inhabitants. More than 2,000,000 of them are Catholic. There are more than 1,700 priests and several times as many religious, both men and women. In its liturgy and social life as well as in sheer numbers, Malabar is more Catholic than many parts of the U.S.A. in sharp contrast to India as a whole where Catholics number only one per cent of the population.

A traveler in South India, or more particularly in Malabar the region which comprises Travancore-Cochin State, experiences at every turn, evidences of the Faith. Churches and wayside shrines are numerous. The angelus bell divides the day and in the evening there is family prayer and from house to house is heard the rhythmic recital of the rosary.

There are processions and pilgrimages when several villages join in honoring Our Lady. Sometimes the Stations of the Cross are made by crowds of men and women who carry huge wooden crosses on their backs walking along a specially constructed three-mile "Via Crucis."

Most of the Catholics of Malabar claim to be descended from the converts of St. Thomas the Apostle. A wealth of evidence supports their claim. When the Portuguese came to India this region already had a well-established Catholic community. Songs tell how in ancient times St. Thomas came in a ship from Arabia and landed in Cranganore on November 21st, how he preached and worked miracles as he travelled through the villages making converts and how he was finally martyred at Mylapore on July 3rd. Today we know nothing of St. Thomas' other converts in India but the Christian community of Malabar has remained faithful and loyal through the ages.

Unlike the Indians of the North, these people are of Dravidian stock, usually small and very graceful with a beautiful, deep skin color. They do not speak a language of the Indo-Aryan family used in the North, but Malaya-

lam, a literary Dravidian language as old as English and derived originally from Tamil. Many of the Christian families were originally high caste Hindus and have kept their influence and prestige through the centuries. Even now, the St. Thomas Christians in general, who form a closely knit community, command great respect among their non-Christian neighbors. Their educational standard is very high. For their relatively small number, they have 109 Catholic High Schools and seven Catholic Colleges with University courses of study. Their literacy rate is the highest in the region and well over 2000 Catholics hold University degrees. Among their intellectual activities the publication of eleven Catholic magazines and six Catholic newspapers is of special interest.

For many centuries the Catholics of Malabar were under the jurisdiction of the East Syrian Patriarch and used the Syro-Chaldean liturgy. Since the sixteenth century however they have suffered much misunderstanding from Latin Catholics ignorant of the true meaning of the word "Catholic."

From the beginning of the Church until today there has never been one universal liturgical language or rite. Our Lord taught in Aramaic and acted in the manner of the Jews. As His Apostles began to reach the gentiles, His words and actions were translated into the language and manner of the Greeks, the Latins and others. Of these, Syriac was by far the closest to Our Lord's own Aramaic. It had an Eastern and a western dialect and both are used for the Mass and the Sacraments where we would use Latin. The eastern dialect became the liturgical language in other places besides Syria and one of these places was Malabar which developed an elaborate and beautiful ritual of its own. The Catholic Church embraces and sanctifies not only the souls of men but their whole lives, their different philosophies, their various languages and customs, their social organization. Each race, each people, has something different to contribute to the holiness and Catholicity of the Church and to the perfection of its worship.

The Latin rite Christians who came to India in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries did not realize this. They thought being Catholic meant doing everything in exactly the same way as they themselves did it. They found traces of Nestorian heresy in some Syriac liturgical books and a ruthless attempt was made to latinize the Church of Malabar completely, even replacing the local Bishops with foreign Latin rite Bishops. In spite of the Pope's plea the people were deprived of a truly Catholic form of worship which embraced their whole social and cultural life and which they traced back to the time of the Apostles.

To most of us Christianity means the way we are used to living and praying, the way we have always offered the Mass and celebrated the Sacraments. All this was taken away from the St. Thomas Christians when the foreign invaders with their foreign liturgy that seemed to them cold, abrupt and irreverent forced on them a Latin rite Bishop. For example, they used to have three different forms of the Common of

(Right) The Most Rev. Benedict Mar Gregorios, Syro-Malankara rite, Archbishop of Trivandrum, successor of Mar Invanios, with Mother Anna Dengel, on a recent visit to the Motherhouse in Philadelphia.
(Left) Beautiful Christian Woman, Ernakulam.

the Mass but now they had only one and that one was in Latin, a language with which they had no previous contact and which even used a different alphabet and different script. They used to use leavened bread and receive under both species; now they had to be content with small paper-thin unleavened wafers.

They used always to genuflect on both knees to show their deep reverence for the Body and Blood of Christ made present as a Victim on their altars; the Latin rite genuflected with only one knee. In the tradition of the early Church, they used to give the three sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and First Communion all on the same day, even to infants, now this too, was changed.

When they saw that they would lose all this and much more under the Portuguese Latin Bishop, the Malabar Christians refused their allegiance. They were rebelling not against Rome but against the foreign invaders. When they realized that they were in schism most of them, in order to come back into the one true Church, surrendered all that was most precious to them of their own cultural heritage and lived for two centuries under foreign Latin Bishops. Their heroic faith finds no parallel in western history. Finally they were given back their own Bishops and something of their own rite. It was not the ancient Syro-Chaldean rite, but a new modification of it called the Syro-Malabar rite which still has

much of the Latin in it, though the Latin language is not used any more. It is encouraging to know that Rome is now trying to find a way of restoring the whole beautiful Malabar rite with Malayalam as its liturgical language instead of Syriac which most people do not understand.

A few of the St. Thomas Christians, unwilling to surrender everything, remained in schism. They joined the West Syrian Jacobite Church which was separated from Rome by the Monophysite heresy. Recently, however, led by the great Archbishop, Mar Ivanios, many thousands of Jacobites have been coming back into the Catholic Church and have been allowed to keep their own West Syrian language forming the new Syro-Malankara rite.

Today the Syro-Malabar, Syro-Malankara and Latin rites exist side by side in Malabar, each as Catholic as the others. Yet the still half buried Syro-Malabar rite has a special claim to attention. It has grown up with the people from Apostolic times and is their own peculiar contribution to the Catholic worship of the Church, making use of those particular gifts and characteristics with which God has endowed them. Even in its present form the rite has four kinds of Masses, a low Mass, a sung Mass, a High Mass and a Solemn High Mass called *Raza* which means mystery. In a solemn High Mass there are three concelebrating priests as well as a deacon and a sub-deacon. Before the priest begins he says the words, "Your commandment" to which his server answers, "The commandment of Christ." In former times the priest used to go in person to his Bishop to ask his

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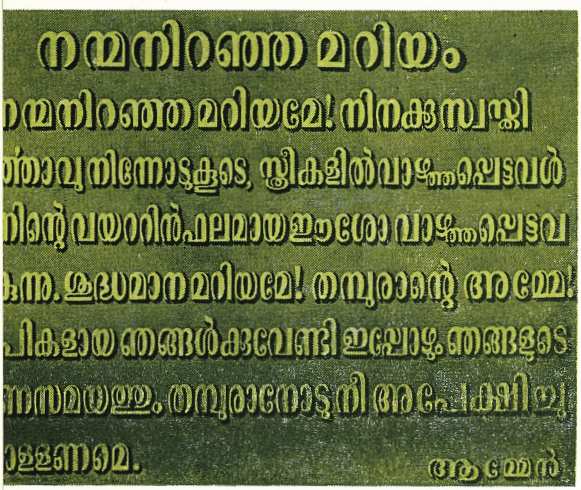


The "Hail Mary", written in Malayalam, the language of Malabar.

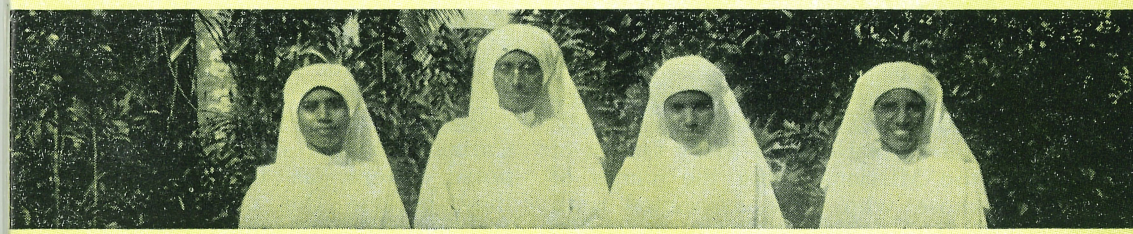
CONGRATULATIONS!

To His Excellency, the Most Rev. Mathew Kavukatt, recently appointed Archbishop of the New Archdiocese of Changanacherry, Syro-Malabar Rite, with Palai and Kottayam, as his Suffragan Sees. This is the second Archdiocese for the Syro-Malabar Rite. Ernakulam, the first, was established in 1923. Trichur, Tellicherry, and Kothamangalam are its suffragans.

Bearers of Christ's Compassion to their suffering brethren.

VALIANT WOMEN

Sr. M. Richard, S.C.M.M.



Sr. M. Magdalen, Sr. M. Veronica, Sr. M. Salome, Sr. M. John, on their first profession day, September 8, 1946.

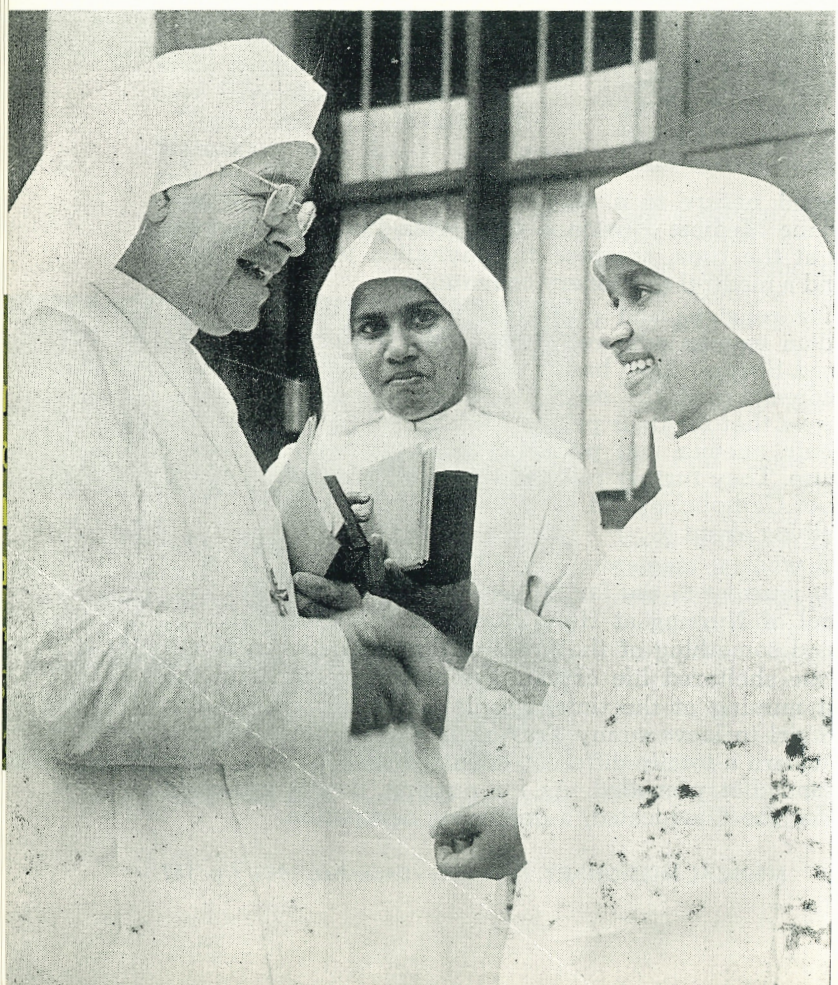
SHARING is second nature to a missionary congregation. Perhaps that explains why the Medical Mission Sisters, even though they were only 15 years old at the time, accepted the invitation to guide others who wished to found a medical missionary community.

The request for religious and professional training came from a band of South Indian women who recognized their own region's need for medically trained Sisters. They had witnessed the effects of disease, the sufferings, epidemics and the early deaths that could have been prevented. They knew that for their people, malaria, tuberculosis, smallpox, cholera, chronic anemia and parasitic infections were expected visitors at each house. They further realized that their area with its long and strong history of Catholicism had very few Catholic hospitals. They resolved to so something about it.

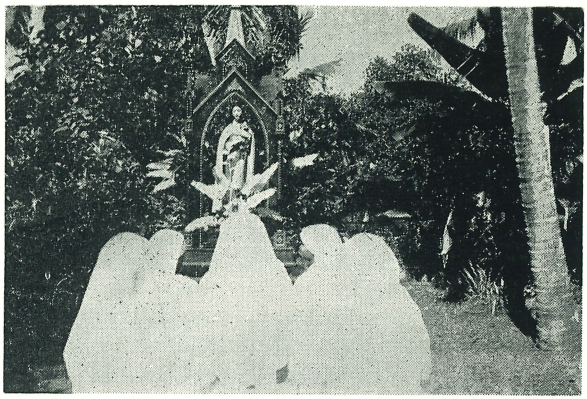
To understand what a momentous decision it was for this small group of women to journey to the far North of India and enroll themselves in the School of Nursing at Holy Family Hospital, Rawalpindi, one must understand something of the great difference between North and South India, the sheltered life of young Malabar women and the opinion held about nursing at the time. People thought it was foolish for a South Indian girl to leave sunny Travancore for the desert North to live in a region where a totally different language was spoken, where different customs and diet prevailed. As for nursing, it was generally considered a task for the uneducated, a degrading occupation.

In spite of these obstacles, the pioneers of the proposed community braved the prejudice of the people they were preparing to help. They accommodated themselves to the North. They worked hard to become competent nurses. They graduated from Nurses' training School, and then returned to Malabar and to the fulfillment of their desire of becoming Religious. It is significant that the first four members of the newly formed Medical Mission Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Queen of the Missions chose the names of those who were associated with Christ in His sufferings. They became Sister M. Veronica, Sister M. John, Sister M. Salome and Sister M. Magdalen.

In 1946, the Sisters took their first vows. Two years later, their first center, the Immaculate Heart of Mary Hospital, was opened in Bharananganam, a small village deep in the heart of Malabar. There, at last, the Sisters were able to care for their people with all the devotion, the gentleness and generosity for which the Catholic women of Malabar are noted. There, as Indian Sisters they became the bearers of



A hearty welcome for Mother Anna Dengel from an Indian Sister novice and Sr. M. T. Veronica, on her recent visit to Malabar South India.



Novices praying before the shrine of St. Therese, Kottayam, India.

Christ's compassion to their suffering brethren. Their patients have come to depend upon these Sisters not only for care in their illness. They seek Christian sympathy from them. They ask the Sisters to help them direct their thoughts to God, help them offer their sufferings for His glory.

In serving the sick, the Sisters have become a part of each family they assist, sharing in the joy at the birth of a baby, advising the mothers, encouraging them during difficult times, participating in the family's happiness and sorrow, sustaining, comforting and at the time of death preparing their patients to meet God. People have come to appreciate the care they receive at the hospital in Bharananganam. The wards are always full and there has been a steady expansion program going on through the years.

In 1953, the Medical Mission Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Queen of the Missions became a part of the "parent" community which had guided them for thirteen years — the Syro-Malabar province keeping their own Syriac rite. There are now more than fifty professed South Indian Sisters in the Society and a number of novices and postulants who are receiving their religious formation at their Kottayam novitiate.

Today, the hospitals in Bharanganam and Changanacherry are almost completely staffed by South Indian Sisters. Some of them are also serving the sick in the Society's other Indian centers. Some are in training to become nurses and technicians. One Sister is studying medicine in England while another is completing her course in pharmacy at the University of Allahabad.

As medically trained persons, these Sisters are helping to improve the health conditions of their country. As Catholic Sisters, they are using the opportunities they have to strengthen the Catholic life of their own people. As indigenous Religious, they are making a very special contribution to the Church in India. In them lies the hope for the future of Indian Catholic hospitals.

IF WE look into the history of the world we find that the causes of the diseases that attacked the human race were not always the same. They differed according to climate, place, and time. This seems to be the case here in Changanacherry, South India. The climate, the place and the time of the year have a marked effect on the people.

Climatic conditions, together with poverty and lack of knowledge are the main predisposing causes, of tuberculosis. People of the ordinary working class are exposed to the monsoons and the hot weather with its high humidity. Children get soaked on their way to school. So far, no arrangements have been made for changing their wet clothes once they reach there. Ordinary coughs, colds and chest pains are neglected with the result that tuberculosis is only detected when the disease is far advanced. More than 80% of the babies of the lower class are victims of bronchitis and pneumonia because they go unclothed.

Malabar Sisters

Climate is a determining factor in the medical needs of a people — as the hospital in Changanacherry, South India, shows.

Elephantiasis is a disease which is seldom seen in the north. The back waters of the west coast of Kerala are the best breeding places for filaria (the thread-like parasites which cause the disease). It is not surprising to see a row of fat-legged beggars and quite a number of the poorer class of people going around with elephant-like movements. One of our neighboring women, with huge legs and a hemoglobin of about 20% takes care of buffaloes and cows. One day she was standing in front of our refectory and Sr. M. Anastasia thought that she was one of the dispensary patients. No, all the woman wanted was to make arrangements to sell some milk.

The high carbohydrate diet and sedentary life of the wealthy class is thought to be the main cause of diabetes. It is not uncommon for more than one member of the same family to have the disease. We very seldom see it among the hard working, tapioca and fish-eating coolies.

In some areas more than 90% of the population is infected with hookworm. The larvae can live for several days in damp soil and grass. Even the people who can afford to wear shoes neglect to do so, and thus very few are exempt from the disease.

Clarama, one of our patients, with a fever of 104°, complained about

some unusual irritation in her throat. In a few minutes she was nauseated. The cause: intestinal inhabitants of various shapes and sizes. If one takes a good look at the naked pot-bellied children seen in the villages, no further explanation is required.

Enteric cases are admitted throughout the year, but they are more prevalent during the summer season. Ordinary well-water and food supplies are contaminated and very few people go through the trouble of being inoculated. Of course, when the fever is diagnosed as typhoid, even the "beedi" (native cigarettes) maker, Abdul will be trying to purchase Chloromycetin.

St. Thomas Hospital, Changanacherry, has been functioning for only about a year. We started with 16 beds on October 3, 1955, and increased to 24 beds in March 1956. During this time, we have already cared for over 12,000 patients, of which 1200 were in-patients.

at Work

Sr. M. Thomas Xavier, R. N.

So often we have to send the patients home because we have no room. The plans provide for 300 beds here eventually but although the foundation of another wing has been laid, funds have run out, so building had to stop. A Catholic training school for nurses is also desperately needed, as there is none in the whole of Malabar. "The fields are indeed white for the harvest" here in Changanacherry. Pray that we may be able to bring Christ to our sick and suffering people, that they, in their turn, may be able to work for God and their fellowmen.

Sr. M. Thomas Xavier, R. N., Sr. M. T. Bernadette, R. N. and Theresa John, R. N. caring for patients in ward, St. Thomas Hospital, Changanacherry, So. India.

Blessing of the Hospital Dispensary at Changanacherry, by His Eminence, Cardinal Tisserant, Nov. 24th, 1953.

GOBI the GARDENER age 8

Sr. M. Thomas Xavier, R. N.

Sr. M. Anastasia and Gobi — teacher and gardener.

LITTLE Gobi, age eight, has contracted to weed some of the hospital compound. As his school begins only at 1 p.m., he starts digging in the front yard when we go on duty at 7 a.m. He digs in all directions with full force and vigor, looks around to see whether we notice him or not, and in half an hour is sure to take a break. Then he goes around to the Out-Patient-Department to see whether Sister M.T. Regina needs any paper bags for the medicines. One day when we were rushed he started this job and has continued it ever since.

Gobi lives in one of the huts across from the hospital. His father, a Hindu carpenter, abandoned the family a few years ago. The eighty year old grandfather is supposed to support Gobi, his two sisters and his mother.

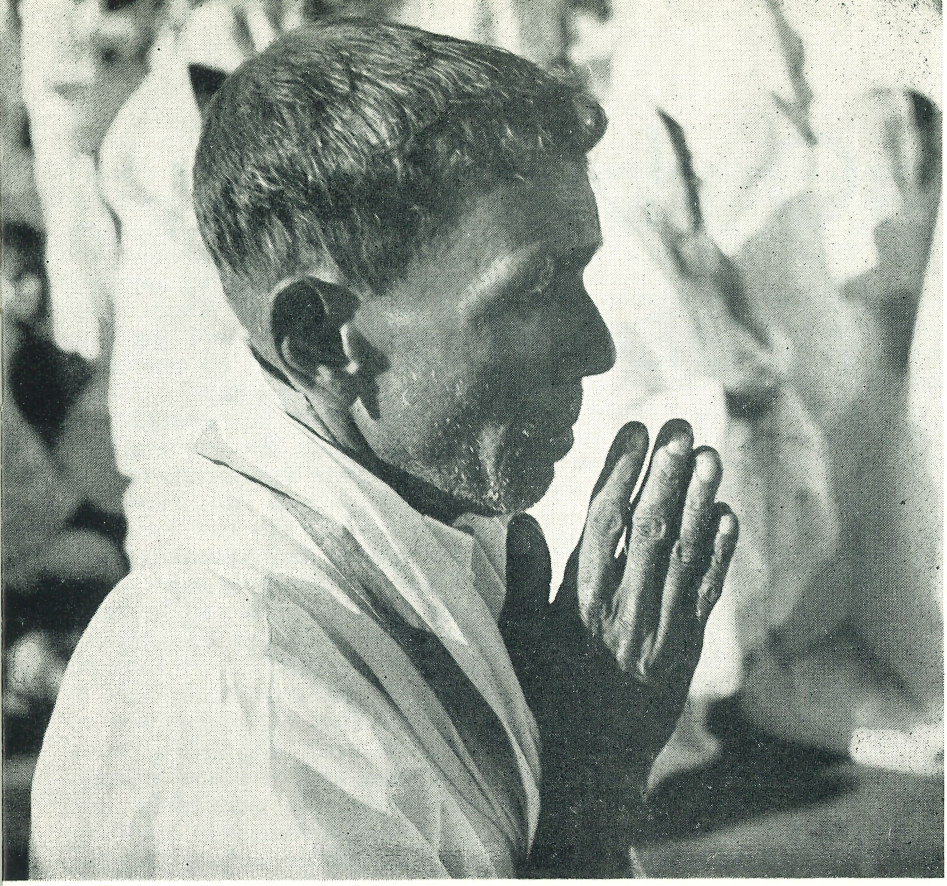
As we don't have a gate and wall around the compound as yet, the neighboring cows and goats have a free pasture land. But when Gobi wishes to feed his cow, he comes to get permission! Whenever any of the Sisters are at the bus stop near the hospital, the small trunks and bags find a safe place on Gobi's head.

Almost every day Sister M. Anastasia is interrupted by a knock and a peep at the window near the charting desk. Master Gobi will be ready to tutor her in Malayalam. Sometimes the little teacher gets annoyed with the student's pronunciation of certain difficult sounds. Incidentally, Gobi can understand English better than the average middle school student.

One morning he came with a fine surprise. He had a stick, on one end of which his grandfather had carved the head of a dog. Gobi explained the anatomy of the head and was very proud of his grandfather.

The Lord has gifted Gobi with a wonderful personality, big sparkling brown eyes, an infectious grin revealing pearly white teeth. Let us hope that he will use these gifts in the right way.

YESTERDAY, TODAY, FOREVER



Sr. M. Gerard, S.C.M.M.

The reverent worship of the Eastern rites is an example to the West.

THE Church in South India holds a unique position. She stands as a sign of both the past and the future of Christianity in the land of the Vedas.

Long before Patrick was in Ireland or Boniface in Germany, the faith was flourishing in Indian soil. Through the Apostle Saint Thomas, that great believer, the Christian message was implanted so firmly in

the hearts and minds of the South Indians, that to this day their proudest claim is to be called, "Saint Thomas Christians."

Such apostolic foundations necessarily point to a continued desire to bring Christ to others. Today this very old Church is also a very new Church, preparing its young priests to become missionaries, to turn their eyes toward new fields, especially toward their brothers in the north of India who as yet have not found the fulfillment of their religious longings in Him Who came to complete the deepest yearnings of all men. The faith of the first Apostle in India is now being carried by many modern apostles as a sign of the vitality of a Christianity which is "ever old" and "ever new."

This "oldness" and "newness" of Christianity in India is further exemplified in the liturgical worship of the Saint Thomas Christians. Their rite, called the Syro-Malabar rite, is one of the oldest liturgies in the Church. In it we find many hints of an ancient way of worship which has a great deal to teach the modern Christian. Its generous use of symbolism and gesture — the bowing so often, the kissing of the altar, etc. . . . remind us with what awe and reverence we ought to approach God in our worship. There is everywhere the sense of the "immensae majestatis," so needed by today's "matter-of-fact" churchgoer who must be re-taught the very old truth that we ought to tremble before the majesty of God, bow down before Him, even "fall as one dead at His feet," as Saint John says in the Apocalypse.

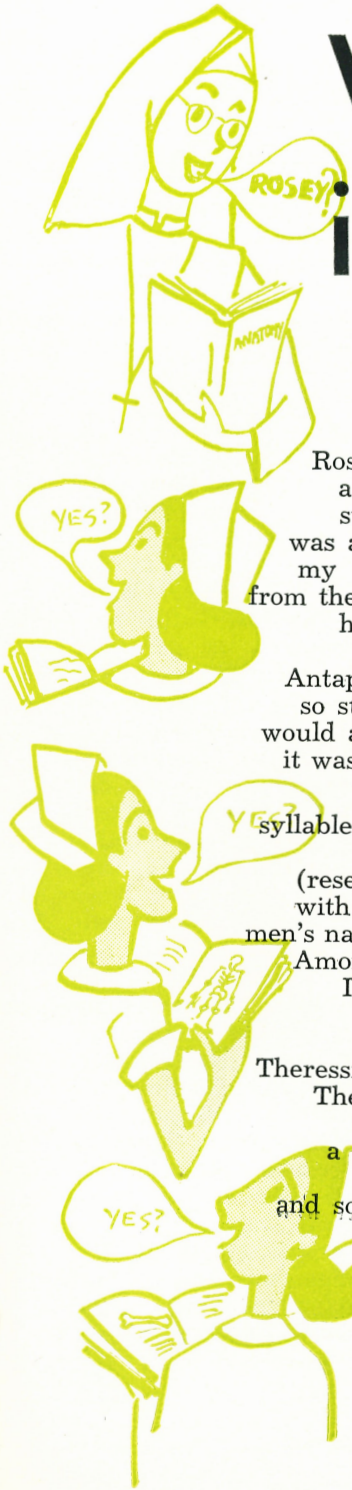
These are precisely some of the things the modern liturgical movement is trying to teach us. And it is certainly more than coincidence that growing up side by side with that movement is a renewed interest and study of the various oriental rites and liturgies which have so admirably kept some of the venerable traditions and spirit of the ancient Christian Church whose closeness to the "tradition of the Fathers" makes her the model "par excellence" of both the old and new in Christianity. For Christ's Church, like Christ Himself, is "yesterday, today, and forever."

YOUR WILL . . .

can help the Medical Mission Sisters bring health and healing to the sick and suffering of mission lands. The following approved form of bequest may be used:

"I hereby give (devise) and bequeath to the Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries (also known as the Medical Mission Sisters), an institution incorporated under the laws of the State of Maryland, and its successors forever the sum of $. . . . . for its purposes."

If you have already made your will, it is not necessary to make a new one. It is sufficient that a codicil be added, using the above.



Which One is Rosey?

Sr. M. Nathaniel

In my first class of student nurses there were M. S. Rosey, P. L. Rosy, K. C. Mary, V. A. Mary, and Anna. Later, a third Rosey joined the group; at the same time we had a staff nurse named P. C. Rosy. So when you said "Rosy" it was anyone's guess which one you had in mind. I tried calling my "Rosys", "Molly" and "Polly," but these are so different from the Malayalee names that they didn't take to them. Now we have four Philomenas with no last names by which to distinguish them. "Which one?" is the perennial question. Antappan is one of our servants. At first hearing the name was so strange that when I tried to call him or speak about him I would always end with a familiar word, "Antiphon." Later when it was analyzed the name was easier, for "Appan" means father.

It is common here in South India to attach this as a last syllable making such men's names as Lonappan, Ayyappan, Kuttappan and Avarappan. The more dignified name for father (reserved by Christians for priests, but used indiscriminately with "appan" by Hindus) is "achan." This too is added to form men's names like Lonachan, Pappacha, Mathachan and Thomachan. Among the women these so called "pet names" vary somewhat. In this locality they are ordinarily *amma* (mother), *kutty* (baby) and *kochu* (small). In the case of Theressia, we may have Theressianna, Theressiakutty, and Kochu Theressia: or for Mary, Mariamma, Mary Kutty and Kochu Mary. The names are not given on account of a person's characteristics or size but just indiscriminately. Not everyone has a "pet name," but those who do usually use them officially all their lives. They are so baptized e.g. Annamkutty; and so the name appears in school registers. "Pet names" have then, a different status than English nicknames. Some people, however, have names that correspond exactly to English nicknames. A little girl may be baptized "Annie" yet may always be known as Recknum (a kind of pearl) or Leela (playful).

A suffix, used to indicate respect or reverence, is "ji." This first came up in class, when a girl read something that wasn't in the book. Suddenly she would be saying something like this: "Gandhiji was a great leader in this country." As time went on it was evident that whenever they referred to Gandhi they'd say "Gandhiji." In the Out-Patient-Department we hear the children crying "Ammaji, Ammaji," as they pull away in fear of the nurse who has an injection all ready for them once the screeching and sobbing subsides.

It is also somewhat common to use a suffix showing a person's profession; e.g. "Mary Teacher," "Joseph Compounder"; and our graduate nurses are "Annamma Sister," "Baby Sister" and "Rosy Sister." This is really an endeavor to establish identity, for there are a great many Theressias, Philominas, Rosys, Marys, and Celines.

Among the men's names, as well, there are many duplicates. Thomas (Thoman), Joseph (Ouso, Ouseph), George (Vareed, Varkey, Vargheese), Paul (Paily, Poulose), Francis (Chandy, Cheeku) and Michael are really overworked. These duplications may not seem to make any difference but they really do because ordinarily these people do not use a surname, but only the first name and two initials — yes, everybody: men, women and children!

In a class of 55 students there must without exaggeration sometimes be a dozen Jose's, Theressias, etc. So, in speaking to them, the teachers use only the initials — and it is very interesting that they seldom have duplications among the initials, except of course, in the same family where they must be identical because the first initial is the first letter of the house name, and the second is the first letter of the father's name. For example, let's take K. C. Rosy. She is Rosy, from Kaithathara House, daughter of Cheeku. It seems sort of discourteous to call people (especially young girls) only by a set of initials but it is the proper etiquette for South India where one has no alternative.

House names replace the English surnames. These are very important because in the villages there are no street names. Mail is delivered, then, according to the house name on the address. Many of the latter have the suffix *parambu* (compound) or *parambil* (in the compound) attached, e.g. *Neduparambil* (in the middle of the compound), *Kappithan parambil* (in the Captain's compound). Most of these house names describe the location or characteristics of the house which could have been very useful (to the mail man), but they have been handed down for so many generations that the meanings are not very pertinent today. Yet one cannot say they have outlived their usefulness, for what is a man without his house name? He is a beggar. Sometimes, poor people come to the Dispensary and they can offer only a given name. They do not belong to any family, house or compound. The house name system is a great stabilizing factor in society, for it is extremely difficult to wander about and get lost or to take up a new abode without the rest of the family uprooting itself and accompanying the nomad.

Christmas in Malabar

Rev. Thomas Paruvanani

THERE are areas in Malabar, India, where eighty per cent of the people are Catholic. In these Christian communities, Christmas Eve is the most outstanding night of the year. All along the rural expanses of hill and valley, plain and meadow, at every mile or two, a church cross may be seen rising to the sky. An hour or so before midnight, the church bells and then the pop-guns, announce the approaching solemnity. Thrice at regular intervals this action takes place. Almost everyone in the family attends the Midnight Mass and its ceremonies. It is a special occasion for the children and only the disabled old folks remain at home. If Christmas happens to fall at the time of a dark phase of the moon, the families appear carrying lighted torches made of dried stalks of the cocoanut tree. A procession begins towards the Church.

In the Churches of the Syro-Chaldaic rite in Malabar (now known as Kerala, in political parlance) the Christmas Mass is preceded by a solemn ceremony which is at the same time inspiring, dramatic, and deeply significant. The floor of the church is strewn with the stiff leaves of a fragrant plant. The Crib, made of native silken grass and palm twigs, is prepared in the middle of the aisle. Only the Infant is missing. The sanctuary is veiled. The celebrant and his ministers in gold vestments come to the front of the sanctuary, outside the veil. The priest blesses incense and distributes handfuls to a few of the faithful around him. The priest and the choir sing alternately until at the climactic moment, after the singing of the epistle of the day, the sanctuary veil is raised and the Infant Jesus is exposed, resting on a lovely silk cushion on the altar. All the church-bells, numerous pop-guns and sundry musical instruments including drums and trumpets outside the church door announce this solemn moment of *Nativity*. The Infant Jesus is now taken to the crib where the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, the shepherds, the oxen, the ass, the angels and the magi (at a distance) have already been placed, and the priest thrice incenses the crib in solemn chant.

The Infant is next taken in procession to the courtyard of the church called "Kurisumothotty" (which means the 'cross lot,' where all churches have a big granite cross.)

Here the Sexton has prepared twigs for a fire. It is shaped like a triangle with a wick in each of the three corners. Upon lighting each wick, the priest holding the Infant Jesus in his arms, sings the first versicle of the "Gloria" — *Gloria in excelsis Deo*. The Infant Jesus statue is taken around the fire several times . . . The choir, and the bearers of the artistic gold and silver crosses, flags, and silken umbrellas accompany the priest. The faithful who received the incense in the Church now put it into the fire.

This is all very symbolic: the triangle, the Trinity; the fire, Jesus — the Light of the World, and since it was cold the night Jesus was born, the Infant is held towards the fire.

The dry palm leaves left over from the previous Palm Sunday are also included in the heap of twigs. The ashes from this fire are kept for Ash Wednesday, the following Lent. Thus, this is a meeting point for the Liturgical Cycle, called the 'Thea-ozhalicha' in Malayalam, meaning the 'fire-ceremony.' The Infant Jesus is now borne back to the crib, where He remains until the feast of Epiphany.

Solemn Mass, the sermon, and the reception of Holy Communion by the Faithful follow in turn. Finally, the festival procession. It is almost daylight. All hurry to their homes for the thrill of the Christmas breakfast now that the twenty-four day fast is terminated. (In recent years this Advent-long fast has been cancelled, thus lessening somewhat the rejoicing of Christmas morning.)

After Independence, the Christmas holiday period was reduced, considerably; actually the Catholics do not need many days to celebrate. This Christmas joy is intense, even if brief.

Behind the beautiful coconut palm trees lay much sickness.

Doctor in Coconut Paradise

Sr. M. Francis, M. D.

A few years ago a country priest was called in the middle of the night to assist a young woman in her last hour. This was a small village in the South of India, in the back waters. Its 3200 inhabitants were almost all Catholics. There is no direct approach to the mainland, the last part of the journey has to be made by boat The young mother-to-be was doomed to die, with the little baby still unborn. There was no doctor or midwife available, and the nearest hospital was hours away —besides the boat journey was impossible. The people were just too poor. The heart of the young priest was greatly moved. He had just been sent to this village and this was one of his first calls. Then, and there, he resolved that he must get medical help for his people.

After years of hard labor, a small hospital building came into being, and on September 1, 1954, Sr. M. Stephanie, Sister M.T. Joseph, Sr. M.T. Agnes, Sr. M.T. Pauline, all Med-

Sr. M. Francis, M. D. examines T. B. patient, carried in on a homemade stretcher.

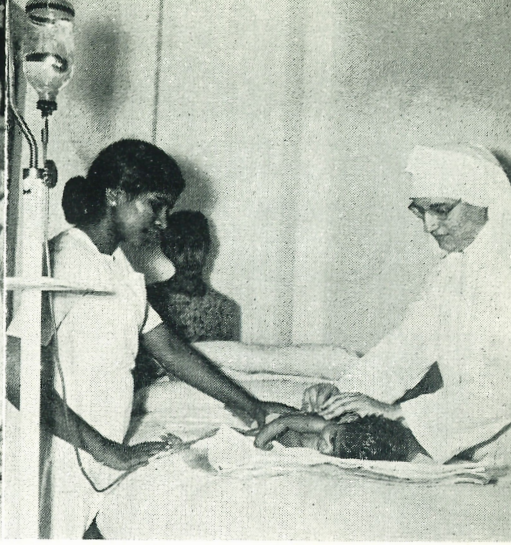
"You need your tonsils removed," says the doctor to this patient.

ical Mission Sisters, arrived on the scene in Thuruthipuram, to get the hospital going. Their heads were full of plans for the new venture. They had packed provisions only for the day itself, and expected thereafter to go around the corner and buy all that was needed to feed a family of five. But there was no store around the corner. All provisions had to come by boat across the river and marketing day is twice a week on Thursdays and Mondays. The kitchen was not ready either. So the Sisters were the guests of Rev. Joseph Chennat, for the first two weeks. Meals were brought from the parish house at noon and in the evening, and breakfast was taken at the rectory after Mass.

Sr. M. Francis, M.D., arrived on October 1st, bringing with her a supply of medicines and hospital goods, some donated, some loaned, by Sister M. Barbara, M.D., in Mandar. We got our own hospital goods through clearance in Madras, just before Christmas. Thus we started with a bare minimum and with only an out-patient department. Attendance was beyond all expectation. In three months, we had seen 13,599 in the Out-Patient Department alone.

Raman was one of the first patients. His story has been repeated in others, endless times. Raman had left his home, why, we never found out, and after having had a try at several dispensaries and hospitals he had been told to go to Madras for treatment. But Madras, for Raman, was here. He was emaciated, nothing but skin and bones. He had a sore extending over the left side of his face and neck; he was unable to swallow. Liquids went down with great difficulty. This was before we had any beds for in-patients. So Raman came day after day, morning and evening, to get his dressings, his injections and his eggnog. Soon he was able to swallow some vitamin pills, and in the course of the months his bones were covered with flesh again, and

Sr. M. T. De Sales, R.N., admires the boy's puppy.



Sr. Andrea, R.N. gives an I. V. to a sick boy.

he looked more like a human being. Where did Raman live? We did not dare ask him, but we believe it was under a coconut tree.

He spent Christmas with us. He was at Midnight Mass watching everything. He got his new shirt like the rest of the servants; he shared the feastday dinner, for now he was able to eat full meals again. Raman helped to prepare the hospital for in-patients. He scrubbed the floors, washed the windows, he washed the beds. He seemed to be a part of the hospital now. The Archbishop put his hand on his head, when he was introduced to him on the opening day, and then Raman vanished. However we received a post card one day telling us that he was well and it was signed "Your faithful servant, Raman."

As the days went by, we began to realize how much misery lies behind the beautiful coconut palm trees which provide for the daily needs of the people. How much sickness! And poverty! Most of the people are poor; they earn their daily bread by fishing or tending the coconut palm tree. They lead a hand-to-mouth existence when they are well, but vitamin deficiencies, malnutrition and malaria, are their daily companions. Tuberculosis is widespread. Infestation with intestinal parasites is common — 90% — and anemia follows in its trail. They drink water from the river and get all kinds of waterborne diseases such as amoebiasis, typhoid and cholera.

On the feast of the Holy Family, 1955, His Grace Archbishop Joseph Attipetty arrived early in the morning to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in our chapel. This was to mark the opening of the in-patient department. By noon, we had our first patients, mother and son. The whole family had taken sick, and two children had already died. The mother had been unconscious for the last three days, and seemed to be breathing her last — but she got

Sr. M. T. Pauline, and Sr. M. T. Agnes converse with a patient in Malayalam.

Rolling in N. C. W. C. barrels of milk to be given to the poor each day. Hundreds come.

well, against all expectations. She spent four months with us. Her little boy also recovered.

"Cash illa" — "No money" — how often the Sisters hear this during one dispensary morning. How can they pay for medicine when they are unemployed and starving? The problem must be solved somehow. It is now the season, for colds, bronchitis, pneumonia, a flare-up of the arch-enemy Tuberculosis. Oh how we welcome the sample medicines, packed with loving care. How many lives have been saved with Terramycin and Aureomycin samples, sent by friends!

And then there are the babies! How pitiful some of them look when they come to us! They are not only sick, they are starved. Look at Joseph. From a distance he looks like a chubby little boy, but just get near him; it is nothing but edema — hunger edema. His mucous membranes are as white as snow, but he has the will to live. The doctor's orders read as follows for him: 1) Eggnog, 2) Vitamins, 3) Iron. Well, Sister M.T. Pauline will have to find another egg for this poor little mite.

"There is a new admission, Doctor, a little baby, just four days old. It has not been nursing for 24 hours."

What is the matter? "Pneumonia," and in spite of all the medicines available and expert care, his little soul flew to heaven that night. He was born in a little hut, that hardly kept the wind out, right on the damp sand that formed the floor, without anyone in attendance on his mother. Must it always be that way for our poor people? Sister M. Stephanie, R.N., the Sister-in-charge dreams of a big airy ward, where we would be able to care for many mothers.

Each year in this Cocoanut Paradise, St. Sebastian is invoked for protection against contagious disease. In the church of St. Francis here in Thuruthipuram, there is a statue of St. Sebastian with sev-

(Continued on Page 186)

Floods made the Hospital in Thuruthipuram an Indian Venice for one crowded week.

Indian Venice

Sr. M. Nathaniel, S.C.M.M.

Friday, June 29

THE floods were not officially upon us until this morning. Our head servant, Ouso led his cow behind him when he came to work today. He had asked if he could bring it, but Sister hesitated to say "yes" until she found out whether some other place was available. Ouso couldn't wait, for the water had risen considerably around his house.

It rained heavily all day. Our Malayalam teacher couldn't come. The brother of one of our nurses came and told her that their compound was under water and she should not go home. The girl in the Laboratory decided not to go home either. There is no room in the Nurses' Quarters (only last Sunday five new students came to stay) so we gave the "flood personnel" a room in the Hospital.

Saturday, June 30

This morning the water has risen several inches and Father had to come by boat to say Holy Mass. He came right to the Hospital gate in a small country boat, called a vanchi. A fleet of 37 vanchies were put on to provide for travel between Kottapuram and Ernakulam.

Some sudden "tempests" and cloudbursts occurred. The electricity went off. The clock stopped because it was knocked off balance—"typical tropical storms."

The storms necessitate our making some changes in household arrangements. The students sleeping on the verandah have been put inside, in the "*big*" dormitory. After we had added a few mats and mattresses to the floor, it didn't seem so big anymore. We hired a new cook and the servants' sleeping space had to be made large enough for her too. A space had to be found for 'Kitchen Karmaly' who usually lives at home. The water has inundated her house and her family has moved to a dry spot. One of the nurses was leaving for vacation but her brother came and told her: "Don't come, there's no space. We are all living in one room. The rest of the house is flooded." It isn't that one person re-

quires much space, but the grandparents, unmarried paternal aunts, uncles, sons, wives, as well as the parents and children constitute the family!

This evening (evening in Thuruthipuram begins about 3 p.m.) there was plenty of vanchi traffic rowing past the Hospital, and between the coconut trees. The water is so deep that our road has become a veritable canal. It was a surprise to see how many people have vanchies. Besides the passenger type (ordinary) vanchies, many of the big freight type (called "wallums") were navigating. One man sailed by, balanced on the end of a log, holding an umbrella.

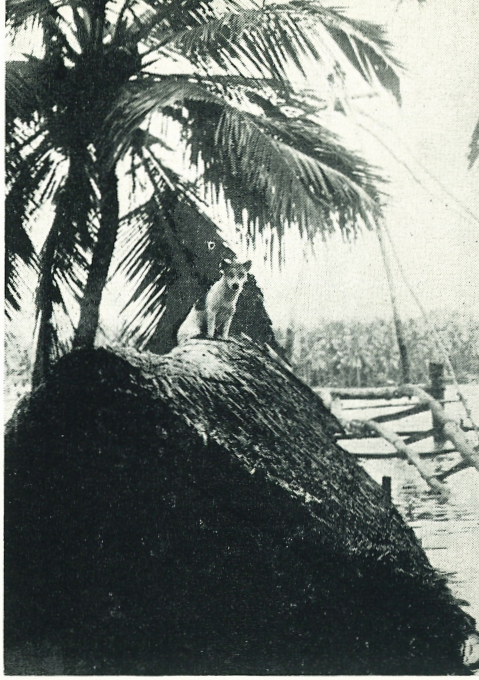
This evening there was an air of foreboding hovering about our lantern-lit recreation. What will happen next? Water, water, and more water!

The water has risen considerably and is edging close to the Hospital. The night watchman had to stand in water to his waist to open the gate for Father's boat.

Sunday, July 1st

There are new lakes and streams everywhere; big coconut trees are standing in deep water. The stone foundation of a house is the temporary home for cows, goats, etc. As though in "Noah's Ark" we also acquired a goat, a dog, and a stray cat. Two men brought a bull and tied him to our wall. There were no questions or explanations. Everywhere around the hospital one meets people who tell us in Malayalam that their homes are flooded.

Coconut shells float about in abundance scattered by the water,



The dog took refuge on the roof of this house.

Tea shop and cigarette store in front of our gate

from the huge piles where in dryer times, they await the process which turns them into coir, then rope.

People are fleeing with their families, animals, pots and pans, to relatives living in unflooded sections. It's a traditional time for visiting, because there is usually a flood every year at this time.

In spite of the difficulties of traveling a man came with a letter of application from a nurse, his niece. We welcomed the application, because we need graduate nurses badly, and asked that she come "as soon as the flood subsides. At the same time, Antony came, he is our clerk, and said, "Sister, I have come to stay, I brought my clothes. If you want me to type evenings, I'll be glad to, but with the flood it is too difficult to come from home every day. Please give me all my meals. Where can I sleep?" At this point our pile of extra mattresses is getting very low. Sr. M. Stephanie keeps saying, "I wish we had rubber walls."

We were expecting a compounder (pharmacist) too. If anyone is essential to our staff, it is a compounder. We were rather worried since it was arranged that she should come this weekend, and then there was the flood. Luckily she got word of the flood. I wonder if our "expandable attic" could have welcomed her if she had shown up.

I have always found it difficult to imagine the hospital being on high ground but this flood proved it. There isn't the slightest suggestion of a hill or knoll where we are but the water comes just so far and we stay high and dry.

Monday, July 2

The level of the water remains about the same. At one time today twenty-two vanchies and wallums parked inside the Hospital compound.

Wednesday, July 4

It is positively amazing to find the water almost entirely gone. It has found its way to the sea again. It may be a few days before the little low-lying houses will be on dry land again. The water was higher this year than it has been for the past four years.

And now life returns to normal. The "flood personnel" will return to their homes. The precious cattle will go too. And soon people will come and go again as they like. We had no emergencies during the floods. It was more like a short week in Venice with the vanchies for gondolas.

May They Rest In Peace

Please pray for our recently deceased benefactors and friends

Rev. Augustine Forster, S.J., Patna, India
Sister M. Edith, D.C., Baltimore, Md.
Mrs. Frank Fleming, Scranton, Pa.
Mrs. Sarah Hyland, Phila., Pa.
Mr. Charles P. Lambert, Brooklyn, N. Y.
Mr. Peter Lambert, Alden, N. Y.
Mrs. Andreas Los Banos, Legaspi City, Philippines (Mother of Sr. M. Scholastica, S.C.M.M.)
Mrs. Aubrey Phillips, Clementon, N. J.

20 CENTURIES OF FAITH

(Continued from p. 166)

permission to celebrate. Now he has the Bishop's general mandate to celebrate but before each Mass there words are still said as a reminder of the unity of the Church which rests on the authority of the Bishops. What is most striking to a Latin rite Christian is the Elevation. The priest crossing his hands, holds up chalice and host at the same time, as though showing God and the people the Body and Blood separated in death, the true sacramental immolation of the Victim.

If in the past, we of the West, quick and unceremonious, rough-mannered and aggressive, have failed to appreciate the gentle refinement of an indigenous Christian culture now twenty centuries deep, perhaps that is because we confuse mechanization, which is a purely physical thing and external to man, with culture which is the traditional pattern of man's behavior and of his attitudes to God and to other men.

DOCTOR IN COCONUT PARADISE

(Continued from p. 182)

en golden arrows in the body of the saint. Early in the year the arrows are taken with great pomp through the whole parish on a sort of plate covered with a white cloth. The procession which forms at the Church is extremely colorful. Rich and poor, alike receive a call and the whole day passes before all are visited.

This year two groups visited the hospital in Thuruthipuram and we were glad to have the arrows brought through. There is great need for the intercession of St. Sebastian in this backwater, Cocoanut Paradise. The No. 1 enemy of the people, Tuberculosis, the white plague, is silently, insidiously boring into the family, attacking the wage earner, the mother, the children. To some it brings quick death, to many serious illness, to others chronic ill health. We pray fervently to St. Sebastian to help the Medical Mission Sisters conquer this great blight on the Cocoanut Paradise.

LEAGUE OF GRATITUDE

Three-fold Purpose: to thank God for the priceless gifts of FAITH
to help bring that gift to those in mission lands
to share in all the works, prayers and sacrifices
of the Medical Mission Sisters throughout the world.

. . . . . .

Dear Mother Dengel,

I want to become a member of your LEAGUE OF GRATITUDE. As long as I can I will send one dollar or more a month.* Please send me a monthly reminder.

Name . . . . . .

Street . . . . . .

City . . . . . Zone . . . . State . . . . . .

(*May be changed or discontinued at any time.)

. . . all in the day's work

patients and patience

One evening a woman came for admission for an ear operation — she came on a Friday evening and upon learning that the operation was only to take place on Tuesday, decided to go home and come in again on Monday. I thought this quite logical and let her go. I reported to Sr. M. Elise, M.D. that the patient would be back on Monday. "Oh, Sister, she said, "this is a very delicate operation, it takes days of preparation and we can't operate unless she stays right now." Off I went again. One of the nurses followed me with a question mark on her face. I said, "Catch those two women, tell them they must be admitted today or else no operation on Tuesday." Off she went. However, they were in a tonga and were already out of sight when we reached the gate.

Just then an old man came along pushing his bike, with his tiffin carrier on the handlebars. The nurse looked at me and said: "I will go after them." She took the bike from the man, handed him the tiffin, jumped on the bike and called to him over her shoulder "I'll be back in a minute." The poor man just stood there with the tiffin carrier in his hand dumbfounded. Finally he asked me, "Now where is she going?" I explained that she had to catch the patient for admission. "I will go over behind the bushes in the garden and say my prayers (Muslim)." The good man prayed and I watched the road. In about ten minutes I saw her coming back again. She had overtaken the tonga, explained the necessity of immediate admission, and the patient was on her way back. We gave the man his bike and I told him that I would give him a reduction in the baby's hospital bill because of his generosity in lending us his bike (as if he could have done much about it — Is that what you are thinking?) He only smiled, finished his prayers and started home.

Sr. M. Christopher, Rawalpindi, Pakistan

taken by surprise

Last week one male patient was admitted with diagnosis, cholecystitis. The next day when Sr. M. Leonie, M.D., made morning rounds she told him he must have an operation tomorrow. After much discussion he agreed with many "if's." The next day I happened to be in the men's ward, and I was asked to prepare the patient, and started to pull a screen around him. The minute he saw me, he was so scared that he got out of bed saying "no operation, no operation." What a pity! He thought I was going to operate on him right there! That was the end of his operation.

Sr. M. T. Josepha, Patna, India

spanish a' la americana

We are having classes in Spanish three hours a week. Mr. de Bourgue, our teacher, has a knack for directing the wrong question to the right person. He asks them from a book. The other evening he asked Sister Marina if she took off her shoes to rest at night. Of course, the class roared because Sister does night duty and is always being teased about her "soft job." We are forever making delicious mistakes; one evening the Sisters were going up to the roof for a little air. Sister Miriam wanted to tell the telefonista where to call but couldn't remember the word for roof, and decided to use the word for ceiling instead, which is *techa.* She got mixed up and said that the Sisters were going for a walk on their *pecha,* which is chest. And then, not so long ago I was discussing the way to wash a baby's hair with one of the aides. She was insisting that the best thing to use was oil, so I said, "No, no, Senorita, the best thing to use is lots of *sopa."* She gave me an odd look and said, "Is that right, Sister? What kind?" With this I realized that I had told her to use lots of "soup" instead of "soap."

Sr. M. Miguel, R.N., Maracaibo, Ven.

THE MEDICAL MISSIONARY
PHILADELPHIA 11, PA.

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Please enter my subscription to THE MEDICAL MISSIONARY MAGAZINE for:

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medical mission news pictures

25,000 baby born at the Maternity Center, Makassar, Celebes, in ten years service. Father holds it in his arms. Sr. M. Paraclita, M. D. holds the first child.

Sr. M. Bonaventure, R. N. (outside) and Sr. M. Christine, M. D. (inside) try out the new ambulance given by N. C. W. C. to Holy Family Hospital, Dacca, E. Pakistan.

Three student nurses of Holy Family Hospital, Rawalpindi, won prizes at the recent Trained Nurses' Assoc. Convention held in Karachi, Pakistan. They were: Naseem (1st, left, front) Miss Winnie Velloza (2nd from left, standing), and Miss Ewa Chandra (4th from left, standing). Sr. M. Ruth, R.N. (center-standing) also won a prize.

MEDICAL

ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL

Whether a man is sick or well, be he rich or poor, black or white, God created him. He is the gifted image of God, capable of the supreme acts of knowing and loving God. Because of this innate dignity, because he is a "person" he can shape his course, weave his life, exercise choice, but of utmost import, he is made to the image and likeness of God. Integrity of both soul and body exist for him by the Will of God. He has an unbreakable relationship with His Creator, that far surpasses all material, economic, political or racial barriers.

Child waiting her turn at the open door of a clinic, Haiti.

MISSION WORLD

Lift up your gates
O ye Princes
and be ye lifted up
O eternal gates
(Psalm 23)

THE OPEN DOOR OF CHARITY

Too often the door between a person and His Creator is closed by disease and suffering, thereby depriving him of the fullness of truth, goodness, and beauty. Christian Charity with its very root and source of life in Christ, opens this door, and through the medical apostolate restores physical integrity paving the way for the grace of Redemption.

Illness often brings fear. Health Center India.

Practical Presents for a Missionary's Christmas

Bandage Scissors

6 for Sr. M. Camillus, R.N. and nurses in Berekum, Africa. ..... ea. $2.00

Chapel Furnishings

Sr. M. George is hoping for a new altar for Rawalpindi's permanent chapel. Up to the present they have been using a ward for a chapel. What will you give for a home for Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament?

Lamp

A good Microscope lamp for Sr. M. Jacinta, M.T., in Karachi lab. $19.00

Microscope

2 needed (binocular) for South India good used ones
ea. $150.00

Towels

Hand towels for Berekum .... ea. 21c

Typewriters

3 needed, even second hand .... ea. $75

Weighing Scales

For Sr. M. Charles in New Delhi, India, to weigh the patients $25.00

Vitamins

For babies and baby food is what Sr. M. Stephanie wants for Christmas in Thuruthipuram. Feed a baby for a month $3.50

Rubber Gloves

For Sr. M. Elise and Sr. M. Luke, the Sister surgeons in Rawalpindi.
1 doz. pr. $4.50

Syringes and Needles

For Sr. M. Pius, R.N., and Sr. M. David, R.N., in Mandar, India.
$2.00 & up

MEDICAL MISSION SISTERS, PHILADELPHIA 11, PA.

Dear Sisters:

Here are $..... for Sister ..... Christmas Gift.

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... Zone .... State .....

The Medical Mission Sisters
wish you a holy
and joyful Christmas,
and every blessing
in the New Year.

Christmas Scene,
Motherhouse, Philadelphia

Mrs. Edward Froehlich
339 Southmont Blvd.
Johnstown, Pa.

'Twas the night before Christmas
in our crowded house,
Not another could squeeze in
not even a mouse!

Up in the attic
quite "snug" it is true,
The Sisters were dreaming
of a Motherhouse new.

The novice's stockings
were hung up with care,
While all prayed St. Joseph
had a hammer to spare!

Won't you this Christmas
help our building begin?
It is cold in the attic,
there's no room in the inn.

MEDICAL MISSION SISTERS, PHILADELPHIA 11, PA

Dear Mother Dengel:

I want to be a builder with you in your work. Here is $.....
towards that end.

Name.....

Address.....

City..... Zone..... State.....